

# EVOLUTION OF THE AMERICAN CULTURE

America is one of a very few countries that has had all the advantages of history and geography--and few of their problems. Because the native Indians were so sparse in this so-called New World they had made a small impact on the land and were easy targets for the arriving Europeans. This North America had abundant resources and diverse and hospitable climate range. Additionally the new immigrants had the advantages of 1000 years of European technology and thoughts. These unique characteristics created a new and particularly individualistic culture that was equally great at cooperation and competition. Below are 9 common characteristics of Americans and subheadings explaining each characteristic. Yes, they do contradict each other--but that is what makes studying humans such an enjoyable activity

- 1 Economic Gain is the main motivation
  - a) Protestant Work Ethic
  - b) The American Dream
  - c) Importance of Property
- 2 Consumer Driven
  - a) Abundance of vast spaces
  - b) Huge natural resources
  - c) Relatively small population and small family size
  - d) Importance of Productivity
- 3 Dynamic Society
  - a) Europe changes in years
  - b) Asia changes in centuries
  - c) America changes in months, days, even hours
- 4 Plural Society
  - a) Melting Pot: Immigrants from all over the world (Assimilation)  
vs.
  - b) Tossed Salad: Despite the above--we also believe in Multi-Culturalism
- 5 Individualistic
  - a) Representative Government (overthrew a monarchy)
  - b) Ability is rewarded
  - c) Organizing is also highly rewarded (a culture of managers)
- 6 Cultural Confrontation
  - a) Interest Groups
  - b) Geographic Areas
  - c) Racism (slavery)
- 7 Pragmatic (Solve the problem)
  - a) Politics: liberal
  - b) Economics: make it work
  - c) Religious: diverse, tolerant, separation
  - d) Social: Conservative (but changing to liberal) and mobile
  - e) Intellectual: Revolutionary ideas
  - f) Artistic: Technology is our art--we love gadgets and inventions
- 8 Belief in the Future
  - a) Optimistic (starting to change)
  - b) Utopian:
  - c) Belief in self-improvement
- 9 Limited Government